

August 5, 2024

Honorable Hala Y. Jarbou
Chief Judge of the United States District Court, Western District of Michigan
138 Federal Bldg. & US Post Office
315 West Allegan Street
Lansing, MI 48933

RE: ArisKnight Winfree

Your Honorable Hala Y. Jarbou:

I am Janice Winfree, ArisKnight's aunt and am writing to ask for leniency regarding his sentencing. ArisKnight was a happy child who made all our lives brighter and was very intelligent, helpful, engaging and even at a young age loved to work. He was an adorable child whose main goal was to grow up as fast as he could and once told me he planned on becoming a scientist in the mornings and a carpenter in the afternoons. I nicknamed him Cubby Bear which was later changed to Cub.

I moved to Chicago in 1997. When I would return for family visits, I noticed changes in Cub's behavior. His speech at times was very rapid and I would have to ask him to repeat himself. At eight or nine years of age his mind ran so fast that when playing Monopoly he would make his plays, run the bank and frequently make his elderly grandmother's plays while I sat there and couldn't figure out what he had just done.

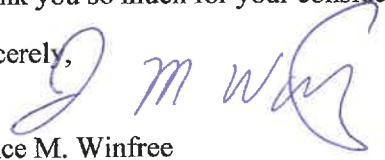
I was very close to Cub when he was young and we had many happy times together visiting the lake and picking fruit at a nearby orchard or just being at home. In particular, I recall one day we went fishing and he caught a fish which later was floating at the top of the bucket breathing its last breath. He was very distressed and I thought he would never fish after that. Cub cared for his siblings by buying his younger brother and a friend ice cream when I found I didn't have enough money in my purse and by protecting his brother and sister from a bully at school. For a high school service project, Cub helped out at my mother's church during a week of Vacation Bible School, where most of the children came from underprivileged homes. In 2022, Cub bought a Golden Doodle that he named Waffles and she has been the joy of his life. Even though in incarcerated, he mentions Waffles in almost every letter he sends to the family.

His parents divorced in December of 2017. Shortly thereafter, I was informed that ArisKnight had become so depressed he was not even showering. They were fearful that he might injure himself. I was so worried and distressed for him then, and later as he had further lengthy episodes of depression and manic episodes which often ran into months rather than weeks. In January of 2023, I was shocked to hear the charges against him. I am still grappling with this situation a year and a half later.

I am familiar with this case. I have noticed a positive difference in him since he has been placed on medication for bipolar disorder. I pray for God's intervention. I love ArisKnight and believe he has much to contribute to society with his intelligence, good sense of humor and winning personality. I believe his life has been ravaged with mental problems for a long time. I hope he receives the help he needs and plead for leniency regarding his parole date since new therapies, medications, and treatments are being researched and coming onto the market that may assist him even more to become a productive and helpful member of society in the future.

Thank you so much for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Janice M. Winfree
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